

1964

Prayers for the Jews in the Soviet Union

EXTENSION OF REMARKS  
OF

HON. ABRAHAM J. MULTER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, June 8, 1964

Mr. MULTER. Mr. Speaker, on April 5 and 6, 1964, 24 major Jewish national organizations gathered in Washington to give united expression to their grave concern over the plight of the 3 million Jews in the Soviet Union.

This American Conference on Soviet Jewry was inspired during its meetings by the following prayer for Soviet Jewry by Rabbi Isser Yehuda Unterman, chief rabbi of Israel:

PRAYER FOR SOVIET JEWRY  
(Prepared by the chief rabbi of Israel—  
translated freely)

Our God who art in Heaven, Thy people stand before Thee this day in prayer for the myriads of Thy children for whom it has been decreed that they be cut off from all who acknowledge Thy kingdom.

They have been deprived of their freedom, their synagogues and study halls have been closed; and they can no longer study Thy Torah, keep Thy laws or observe Thy commandments without fear.

In loneliness, our forsaken brethren cry out against the chains and shackles in which they have been bound to stifle their souls, blot out their identities, and remove all memory of their Jewishness. Yet, there still remain among them those who are loyal to Thy Torah and fulfill Thy commandments at the risk of their very lives. We, their brethren, pray to Thee and invoke Thy help for them, for we are powerless.

Our Father, Thou hast assured us that Thy Torah would not be destroyed nor forgotten by the seed of Abraham; that "in all their affliction, Thou are afflicted" and that Thy divine presence will spare them.

We turn to Thee and seek Thy divine presence; we beseech Thee to preserve the remnant of Jacob because there is none to help beside Thee. Let no curtain of iron separate our brethren from Thee. Show them Thy might and Thy salvation. Frustate the counsel of those who would oppress them. Redeem them from their trials and servitude and proclaim Thy freedom until them, so that they may keep Thy Torah and Thy commandments with none to make them afraid.

Open for them the gates of freedom and bring them up until Thy holy mountain so that all the nations may know that Thou art the Sovereign of the Universe, the Redeemer, and Saviour of Israel.

The conference was also privileged to be led by Rabbi Solomon J. Sharfman of the Synagogue Council of America in the following prayer for the Jews of the Soviet Union:

PRAYER OF RABBI SOLOMON J. SHARFMAN OF THE SYNAGOGUE COUNCIL OF AMERICA AT THE AMERICAN CONFERENCE ON SOVIET JEWRY

Our God who art in Heaven. Thy people Israel stands before Thee this day in prayer

for the myriads of Thy children upon whom it hath been decreed to be severed from all who profess Thy sovereignty. In Soviet Russia, their synagogues and study halls have been closed or destroyed; and they can no longer study Thy Torah without fear, keep Thy laws without molestation, or speak their language and live their lives in equality with their neighbors.

They are singled out as Jews and harassed from birth to death and even in burial for their Jewishness. The loneliness and forsakeness of our brethren cry out even more when their own spiritual leaders are compelled to deny their evil lot, justify their injustices and publicly protest all efforts of their more fortunate brethren in other lands to alleviate their plight and to restore their legal and human rights to justice and equality under the law of their very own land.

O God, our Father, see how we have become for too long now an object of contempt and derision among the nations. We are counted as sheep led to the slaughter, to be slain and destroyed, or to be beaten and disgraced. And those who were loud in their outcries only yesterday have become so blind and so relentless that they have become our oppressors and tormentors today.

Enlighten them, dear God to the evil of their ways that they may hearken to the wiser and kindlier and more just counsels that arise even in their own midst. Open their eyes that they may see the chains and shackles in which they have bound our brethren, to stifle their souls and blot out their identities, so that there shall remain no memory of Jews, Jewishness, and Jewish culture in a land whose soil has been richly fructified by Jewish blood for over 2,000 years, in peace as well as in war. Show them that the bonds which are forged to enchain Israel always serve in the end to strangulate all people, the tormentors as well as the tormented.

Strangers say to us: "There is no hope for you." So hasten Thy deliverance, for Thy people are worn out and no rest is granted them. When men do evil and spare not, for Thine own sake, deal kindly with us and delay not.

Guardian of Israel. Arouse the conscience and awaken the hearts of all mankind, so that deliverance may be forthcoming now, instead of pious regret and vain repentance when it is already too late.

Let no curtains of iron separate us from Thee, our Father in Heaven. Have mercy and grant relief to our brethren who are in distress and fear and desolation, that they may enjoy light instead of darkness, liberty in place of oppression, so that we may serve Thee as a people united in one faith, to help bring Thy blessings of peace and brotherhood for all mankind speedily and very soon; and let us all say "amen."

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